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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Mighty God, You are the strength of our lives, our safe fortress, and our shelter from life's storms. During this season of a raging tempest, speak Your peace to our Senators. Remind them that You continue to rule Your universe through the unfolding of Your prevailing providence, and that Your truth continues to march on in our Nation and world.

Lord, prosper the works of the hands of our legislators as they strive to glorify You with their thoughts, words, and actions.

May faith replace fear, truth defeat falsehood, justice triumph over greed, and love prevail over hate.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RUSSIA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, if reports are true that Russia has been paying a bounty to the Taliban to kill American soldiers, this is a very serious escalation of what Russia expert Edward Lucas dubbed "The New Cold War." Mr. Lucas said that back in 2008.

This sort of movement by Russia, if it is proven—and there are a lot who believe with Russia it is possible—it demands a strong response. And I don't mean a diplomatic response.

We have had previous things like this happen with Russia. President Bush tried playing nice with Russia, then talking tough when Putin showed his true nature.

President Obama repeated this cycle—you know the word—"resetting" relations, despite Russia having just occupied parts of our ally Georgia, and then switching gears when Russia invaded Ukraine.

Putin is a KGB guy who understands only strength. His popularity has taken a hit lately. It makes him very unpredictable. That may be why he is doing these things, even though Russia has a reputation for doing them all the time.

So we need to increase deterrence on NATO's eastern flank. We should also hit back where it hurts.

Dictators like Putin fear their own people—and, of course, for good reason. Putin and his cronies have enriched themselves at the expense of ordinary Russians.

This week Russia is having a referendum on waiving term limits, allowing Putin to stay in power when his term is up. Of course, Russia will probably be conducting a rigged election.

We should point out to the Russian people that they don't have to accept that.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

PROTESTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I had planned to speak first today about the NDAA. I had planned to discuss our work to ensure American servicemembers can protect our Nation and secure peace for the United States.

Unfortunately, the inexplicable passivity and weakness of local leaders in our own country has denied some citizens peace and security right here at home.

Here we are in Congress, equipping our Armed Forces to protect the homeland. Yet some local leaders have apparently felt it would be too politically incorrect to do their jobs and keep the peace.

It has now been 22 days since radical demonstrators seized control of several blocks of downtown Seattle, drove the police out of a precinct, and declared an autonomous zone, which the mob itself would rule.

It is worth pausing to consider how the mainstream media and leading Democrats might have reacted if tea party protesters in 2009 had forcibly created a breakaway zone within a major city and barred the actual authorities from entering. Somehow I am skeptical the press would have bent over backward to find a sympathetic light. Somehow I doubt these same politicians would have felt compelled to curry favor with the occupiers or flirt with their demands.

But we are talking about the American left in 2020. So, instead, what we get is a major newspaper lavishing praise—praise—on the "liberated streets" and a mayor and local government that have expressly declined to restore order and the equal protection of the law.

The mob has gotten its way.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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